

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

networks

America and World War II, 1941-1945

Lesson 3 *The War in Europe*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What kinds of sacrifices does war require?

Reading HELPDESK

Content Vocabulary

periphery the outer boundary of something

convoy system a system in which merchant ships travel with naval vessels for protection

Academic Vocabulary

target something or someone fired on or marked for attack

briefly for a short time

intense existing in an extreme degree

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

networks

America and World War II, 1941-1945

TAKING NOTES: Organizing

ACTIVITY Use the following graphic organizer to record the major battles discussed and when each was fought.



IT MATTERS BECAUSE

British and American troops won victories over the Axis in North Africa and Italy. Then, Allied leaders made plans for an invasion of Europe.

Halting the Germans

GUIDING QUESTION Why did Churchill and Roosevelt want to attack German-controlled areas in North Africa before areas in Europe?

Since 1940, U.S. military planners had discussed fighting a war with a front in Europe and a front in the Pacific with President Roosevelt. In early 1942, Roosevelt wanted to get U.S. troops into battle in Europe. However, Prime Minister Churchill did not believe the United States and Britain were ready to invade Europe. Instead, Churchill wanted to attack the **periphery**, or edges, of the German empire. Roosevelt agreed. In July 1942, Roosevelt ordered the invasion of Morocco and Algeria, two French territories. Since France was controlled by Germany, Morocco and Algeria were indirectly under German control.

The Battle for North Africa

Roosevelt decided to invade for two reasons. The invasion would give the army some experience without requiring a lot of troops. It would also help the British troops fight the Germans in Egypt. Britain's empire included India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, and Australia. These countries sent supplies to Britain through Egypt's Suez Canal.

German general Erwin Rommel commanded the "Afrika Korps." He was so successful in this region that his nickname was "Desert Fox." The British fought Rommel's troops in a 12-day battle at the Egyptian coastal city of El Alamein. After

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

the British won the Suez Canal in November 1942, Rommel retreated. However, German forces remained a serious threat in North Africa.

Later that month, U.S. troops led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower invaded North Africa. The Americans advanced into the mountains of western Tunisia. There they fought the German army for the first time. At the Battle of Kasserine Pass, the Germans outfought the Americans, who had about 7,000 casualties and lost nearly 200 tanks. Eisenhower got rid of the general who led the attack. He put General George Patton in command. The U.S. and British forces finally pushed the Germans back. On May 13, 1943, the last German troops in North Africa surrendered.

The Battle of the Atlantic

After Germany declared war on the United States, German submarines entered U.S. coastal waters. American cargo ships were easy **targets**. They were especially easy to see at night. The dark shapes of the ships showed up clearly against the lights from cities. To protect the ships along the Atlantic shore, citizens on the East Coast lowered their lights every evening. They put up special "blackout curtains." If they had to drive at night, they did not use headlights.

By August 1942, German submarines had sunk about 360 American ships along the East Coast. Many of these ships were oil tankers. The loss of so many ships convinced the navy to set up a **convoy system**. Cargo ships traveled in groups called convoys. Warships traveled with the cargo ships to protect them. The convoy system made it much more difficult for a submarine to torpedo a cargo ship and escape without being attacked.

The spring of 1942 marked the high point of the German submarine campaign. In May and June alone, more than 1.2 million tons of ships and cargo were sunk. Yet in those same two months, U.S. and British shipyards built more than 1.1 million tons of new ships. At the same time, U.S. airplanes and warships began to use new technology. The technology included radar, sonar, and depth charges. Radar and sonar waves could locate submarines. Explosive shock from depth charges could sink them. The new technology made German submarines easier to fight. The Battle of the Atlantic turned in favor of the Allies.

The Battle of Stalingrad

Adolf Hitler believed that to defeat the Soviet Union, he had to destroy the Soviet economy. In May 1942, he ordered his army to capture strategic (important to the overall plan) oil fields, factories, and farmlands in southern Russia and Ukraine. The city of Stalingrad was the focus of the attack because the city controlled shipping on the Volga River and was also a major railroad connection. Capturing Stalingrad would cut off the Soviets from the resources they needed to stay in the war.

German troops entered Stalingrad in mid-September. Stalin ordered his troops to defend the city no matter what happened. The Germans were forced to fight from house to house. They lost thousands of soldiers in the process. In addition, the Germans were not prepared to fight in the bitter cold. On November 23, Soviet reinforcements arrived. The new troops surrounded Stalingrad. They trapped almost 250,000 German troops. The battle ended in February 1943. About 91,000 Germans had surrendered. Only 5,000 of the Germans who surrendered survived the Soviet prison camps. Each side lost nearly half a million soldiers. The Battle of Stalingrad put the Germans on the defensive.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining What was Roosevelt's purpose in invading North Africa?

Striking Germany and Italy

GUIDING QUESTION What were the goals of strategic bombing in Germany and the invasion of Sicily?

In November 1942, the Allies successfully invaded North Africa. Their success showed that large invasions could be launched from the sea. Roosevelt decided to meet again with Churchill. They would plan the next part of the war. In January 1943, Roosevelt headed to Casablanca, Morocco, to meet the prime minister of Britain.

At the Casablanca Conference, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to increase the number of bomber attacks on Germany. The goal of this new campaign was to destroy the buildings, factories, and other structures that Germany needed. In addition, Roosevelt and Churchill hoped that the damage would hurt the Germans' morale. The Allies also agreed to attack the Axis on the island of Sicily. Churchill was sure that the Italians would quit the war if the Allies invaded their country.

Strategic Bombing

The Allies' strategy of bombing German manufacturing areas was being used before the Casablanca Conference. Britain's Royal Air Force had dropped an average of 2,300 tons (2,093 t) of explosives, or materials that create a violent and usually destructive release of energy, on Germany every month for more than three years. The U.S. Eighth Army Air Force had dropped an additional 1,500 tons (1,365 t) of bombs during the last six months of 1942. The new bombing campaign would drop even more bombs on Germany. Between January 1943 and May 1945, the Royal Air Force and the Army Air Force dropped approximately 53,000 tons (48,230 t) of explosives on Germany every month.

The bombing campaign did not destroy Germany's economy or hurt German morale. However, it did cause a serious oil shortage, and it destroyed the railroad system. It also destroyed many aircraft factories. Germany could not produce enough planes for its own air force. By the time the Allies landed in France, they had control of the air. Allied troops would not be bombed.

Striking the Soft Underbelly

The Allies increased their bombing of Germany. At the same time, plans to invade Sicily also moved ahead. General Dwight D. Eisenhower commanded the invasion. General Patton and the British general Bernard Montgomery led the ground forces. The invasion began before dawn on July 10, 1943. The weather was bad. Even so, the Allied troops made it to shore with few casualties. A new amphibious truck delivered supplies and weapons to the soldiers on the beach.

Eight days later, U.S. tanks moved through enemy lines. They captured the

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

western half of the island. Patton's troops then headed east. The British attacked from the south. By August 17, the Germans had left the island.

The attack on Sicily created a crisis within the Italian government. The king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel, and a group of Italian generals decided that it was time to remove Mussolini from office. On July 25, 1943, the king arrested Mussolini. The new Italian government began to negotiate the terms of surrender to the Allies.

After Italy surrendered, German troops took control of northern Italy, including Rome, and returned Mussolini to power. The Germans then took up positions near the town of Cassino, which was located in rough, rocky land. The Allies did not want to attack such a difficult place. Instead, they landed at Anzio, which was behind German lines. The Allies hoped the Germans would retreat. However, the Germans surrounded the Allied troops near Anzio.

It took the Allies five months to break through the German lines at Cassino and Anzio. The Germans finally retreated in late May 1944. Less than two weeks later, the Allies captured Rome. However, fighting continued in Italy for another year. The Italian campaign was one of the bloodiest in the war with more than 300,000 Allied casualties.

The Tehran Conference

Roosevelt wanted to meet with Stalin before the Allies invaded France. In late 1943, Stalin proposed that Roosevelt and Churchill meet him in Tehran, Iran.

The leaders reached several agreements. Stalin promised to fight the Germans when the Allies invaded France in 1944. Roosevelt and Stalin then agreed to divide Germany after the war. They believed this would keep world peace. Stalin promised that after Germany was defeated, the Soviet Union would help the United States against Japan. He also accepted Roosevelt's proposal of an international peacekeeping organization after the war.

PROGRESS CHECK

Evaluating What did Roosevelt and other leaders hope to accomplish by attacking Germany and Italy?

The D-Day Invasion

GUIDING QUESTION What if D-Day had failed and Germany had defeated the Allies in Europe?

After the meeting in Tehran, Roosevelt headed to Cairo, Egypt. Roosevelt and Churchill continued planning an invasion of France. They wanted to force Germany to fight the war on two fronts again. The code name for the invasion was "Operation Overlord." The president chose General Eisenhower to command this important operation.

Planning Operation Overlord

Hitler prepared for an attack. He strengthened his troops on the French coast

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

along the English Channel. However, he did not know when or where the Allies would land. The Germans believed the landing would be in Pas-de-Calais. This was the area of France closest to Britain. The Allies encouraged this belief. They even placed fake equipment along the coast across from Calais. The real target was farther south. The Allies would invade a 60-mile area of beaches on the Normandy coast.

This invasion was the largest amphibious landing ever. Choosing where it would happen was one of the most important decisions of World War II. Allied planners considered coastlines from Denmark to Portugal. They needed a sheltered location with firm flat beaches within range of friendly fighter planes in England. The location also had to have roads for jeeps and trucks, and paths for the hundreds of thousands of U.S., Canadian, and British troops to move inland. The point of attack required a nearby airfield and a seaport, and more than anything else, it had to be located where the Allies could surprise the Germans.

Planners also discussed who should lead France after the invasion. Charles de Gaulle was the leader of the French Resistance forces. This group would help the Allies fight the Germans in Paris. However, President Roosevelt did not trust de Gaulle and would not recognize him as the official French leader.

By the spring of 1944, all the troops and equipment for the invasion were ready in England. The Allies had more than 1.5 million American soldiers, 12,000 airplanes, and 5 million tons (4.6 million t) of equipment. The Allies just needed to set the invasion date and give the command to go. For the date of the invasion, the Allies needed certain conditions. The invasion had to begin at night so darkness would hide the ships crossing the English Channel. The landing boats had to arrive on the beach at low tide at dawn. The low tide and daylight would help the soldiers see where they were going and what they were shooting at. However, the night sky needed to have some light, because paratroopers would be dropped behind enemy lines before the dawn beach invasion. They needed some moonlight to be able to see. The most important condition was good weather because planes could not fly in a storm and troop landing boats could not operate in stormy seas.

Only a few days each month fit these requirements. The first opportunity was from June 5 to 7, 1944. The day of invasion became known as D-Day because Eisenhower's staff called the day any operation began by the name D. On June 5, however, there were clouds, wind, and waves. The Allies could not invade in this rough weather. The weather forecast said the weather would improve **briefly** a day later. The Channel would still be rough, but the landing ships and aircraft could operate. Around midnight on June 6, 1944, Eisenhower looked at the weather forecasts one last time. Then, he gave the final order to begin the invasion.

The Longest Day

Nearly 7,000 ships sailed toward Normandy's coast. The ships carried more than 100,000 soldiers. At the same time, 23,000 paratroopers were dropped inland to the east and west of the beaches. Allied fighter-bombers flew quickly up and down the coast. They bombed bridges and places where the Germans had soldiers and communication equipment. At dawn, Allied warships began a fierce attack on the Normandy beaches. The beaches were code-named "Utah," "Omaha," "Gold," "Sword," and "Juno."

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

The U.S. landing at Utah Beach went well. The German defenses were weak. The Allied troops captured the beach in less than three hours. Then they moved inland. The Allies had fewer than 200 casualties. To the east, British and Canadian landings also went well. By the end of the day, British and Canadian forces were several miles inland.

The landing at Omaha Beach, however, did not go well. Omaha Beach was only four miles long and was surrounded by 150-foot high cliffs. Only five paths led from the beach to the top of the cliff. The Germans had used the geography to help them defend the area. They had dug trenches. They had set machine guns at the top of the cliffs and positioned the guns to guard the paths from the beach. Under **intense** German shooting, the U.S. attack almost fell apart.

General Omar Bradley, the commander of the U.S. forces landing at Omaha and Utah, began making plans to get the troops off of Omaha Beach. Slowly, however, the U.S. troops began to destroy the German defenses. More landing craft arrived. They forced their way through obstacles to get to the beach. Nearly 2,500 Americans were either killed or wounded on Omaha. However, by early afternoon, Allied troops were advancing. By the end of the day, nearly 35,000 U.S. troops had landed at Omaha. Another 23,000 had landed at Utah. More than 75,000 British and Canadian troops were on shore as well. The invasion had succeeded.

PROGRESS CHECK

Summarizing Why was it so important that all of the conditions be met before Eisenhower could order D-Day to begin? What would have happened if the invasion had failed?
